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CONFERENCE ON ASSISTANCE TO LIBERIA
New York, 27 October 1995

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Conference:

   Address by the Secretary-General.

2. Statements by:

   The President of the Republic of Ghana and Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States, His Excellency Flt. Lt. (Rtd.) Jerry John Rawlings;

   The Chairman of the Liberian Council of State, His Excellency Mr. Wilton Sankawolo;

   The Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, His Excellency Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim.

3. Assistance to Liberia:

   (a) Humanitarian assistance and demobilization:

      Introductory remarks by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs;

   (b) Recovery and rehabilitation:

      Introductory remarks by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme;

   (c) The United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group and support for the implementation of the Abuja agreement:

      Introductory remarks by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations;

   (d) General discussion by participants in the Conference.

4. Closure of the Conference.

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ANNOTATIONS

Background

The recently concluded peace agreement in Liberia has created an opportunity to bring to an end the unfortunate conflict that has ravaged that country for more than half a decade. It is now imperative that the international community advance the objectives of the Abuja agreement (S/1995/742, annex) and help in consolidating the peace process through prompt and effective support for humanitarian assistance, the disarmament and demobilization processes and recovery and rehabilitation needs, as well as through assistance to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

In order to achieve these objectives the Secretary-General is convening a Conference on Assistance to Liberia, in collaboration with the President of Ghana and Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Flt. Lt. (Rtd.) Jerry John Rawlings, and the Chairman of the Liberian Council of State, Mr. Wilton Sankawolo.

Assistance to Liberia (item 3)

The attention of participants is drawn to the following areas of assistance required for Liberia.

(a) Humanitarian assistance and demobilization

The humanitarian needs in Liberia and the countries in the subregion are substantial. Of approximately 2.3 million Liberians living in the country, more than 1.5 million people continue to require humanitarian assistance. In addition, 727,000 Liberians have sought refuge in countries in the subregion and will require assistance to return home. The reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as former combatants, will be critical to sustaining the peace process. In this connection, the emphasis of humanitarian assistance will be on assisting people to begin rebuilding their lives and their communities. While emergency relief programmes will continue for some time in order to meet immediate life-saving needs, they will be designed to allow for an easy transition from relief to rehabilitation. These programmes are described in the United Nations consolidated inter-agency appeal for Liberia, September 1995-August 1996 (vols. I and II).

The demobilization and reintegration into civil society of the estimated 60,000 combatants will be critical to the success of the peace process in Liberia. It is widely agreed that the reintegration of combatants should be addressed in conjunction with the reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons. It is also felt that the success of the demobilization process will depend on whether former combatants can find ways of sustaining themselves. In this connection, it is considered that short-term employment opportunities for former combatants should be provided as part of the rehabilitation efforts of communities to which refugees and others are expected to return. These considerations form the basis of the demobilization and reintegration strategy outlined in the thirteenth progress report of the

Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (S/1995/881).

While needs are tremendous, the signing of the Abuja agreement and consequent political developments have had a significant impact on humanitarian assistance activities and demobilization planning in Liberia. Relief assistance may now be extended to civilians living in areas that were previously inaccessible. The programme must also expand to address the humanitarian aspects of the demobilization of former combatants and their integration into civilian life. Coordination mechanisms will be expanded and strengthened to address the new humanitarian requirements of highly complex humanitarian assistance and demobilization programmes. A United Nations humanitarian coordinator will be appointed, serving under the overall supervision of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. A Humanitarian Assistance Unit will be established to support the work of the Humanitarian Coordinator. It will consist of two offices: the Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office and the Demobilization and Reintegration Office, which will support the Humanitarian Coordinator in carrying out his duties and organizing services related to the demobilization of combatants.

(b) Recovery and rehabilitation

While relief activities must continue, it is essential to embark on development initiatives in order to secure the peace and create basic conditions for recovery. The work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) towards a comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery programme in Liberia is based on the following foundations: (a) reaching agreement with the Transitional Government and the various Liberian interests on a strategic framework for short-, medium- and longer-term recovery. This framework would lay the basis for subsequent formulation of a well thought out, consistent and coherent macroeconomic policy framework that could lead to reordering of the country's economic, social and political systems; (b) garnering international support for Liberian efforts aimed at mobilizing domestic resources, engaging national skills and setting priorities for a coherent framework for local and community action; (c) developing alliances with the World Bank, bilateral and multilateral donors, the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other concerned relief and development partners to earmark resources, develop programmes and implement projects to support reconciliation and recovery.

The outcome of this process will be a well-prepared special consultation between Liberians and their international partners that could be held towards the end of the first quarter of 1996. The purpose of the consultation would be to fuse domestic, financial, physical and non-physical resources with those of Liberia's international partners. The consultation would be expected to result in an agreed rehabilitation and recovery programme that would describe a realistic path to a more secure and sustainable future. The attention of participants is drawn to the relevant Conference document.

(c) The United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group and support for the implementation of the Abuja agreement

In accordance with the Liberian peace agreements, ECOMOG has been entrusted with the primary responsibility for assisting the Transitional Government in the implementation of the military provisions of the agreements. ECOMOG has defined its tasks, in this regard, as the following: monitoring Liberia's borders to ensure respect for the arms embargo; assembling and disarming combatants of all factions; carrying out intensive patrols throughout the country in order to build confidence and create an atmosphere conducive to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as the holding of free and fair elections. To fulfil these tasks, ECOMOG has estimated that it will require a total strength of about 12,000 all ranks, as well as substantial logistic support.

States members of ECOWAS have pledged additional troops for ECOMOG and have called on the international community to provide the logistic resources required by the Group.

It will be recalled that a severe shortage of logistic support impeded ECOMOG's ability to carry out its tasks under the Cotonou agreement. With the signing of the Abuja agreement, the re-establishment of the cease-fire and the installation of the Council of State, the prospects for peace in Liberia have improved. It is therefore imperative that ECOMOG be provided with the support required to carry out its responsibilities. Detailed information in this regard, including an annotated budget containing ECOMOG's logistic requirements, is being made available to Member States participating in the Conference. In this connection, ECOMOG has indicated that its most urgent needs include transport and communication equipment. The attention of participants is drawn to the relevant Conference document.

(d) General discussion by participants in the Conference

Delegations are invited to express their views and contribute to the efforts outlined above for the successful implementation of the Abuja agreement.